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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4122
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0643
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9431
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 3989
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1469
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3165
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6531
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4142
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 0587
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0576
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2520
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0187
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000207

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: NLD SHOWS UNITY WITH ETHNICS ON UNION DAY

REF: 05 RANGOON 196

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Classified By: Poloff Dean Tidwell for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

11. (U) SUMMARY: At ceremonies marking Burma's 59th Union Day, the NLD quietly unveiled a new plan for national reconciliation. NLD Chairman U Aung Shwe said that the NLD would endorse the ruling SPDC (the State Peace and Development Committee) as a legitimate interim government if the SPDC agreed to convene a Parliament made up of the elected representatives of the 1990 elections. The new Parliament would prepare a new Constitution and supervise elections to form a new government. The NLD asked the SPDC to respond to its offer by April 17, Burmese New Year. The NLD also showcased a wide range of ethnic politicians at its annual Union Day commemoration event on February 12. The NLD also called on the ruling regime to release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, U Tin Oo and Shan NLD leader Hkun Htun Oo; to allow NLD offices to reopen around the country; and to restore basic rights and democracy to Burma. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) To mark the country's 59th Union Day, the National League for Democracy (NLD) released a "special announcement" with a new proposal to the ruling military regime. NLD Chairman U Aung Shwe asked the ruling SPDC to implement its own law number 14/89, enacted in 1989, to convene a National Assembly (Hluttaw) with representatives elected in the 1990 general elections. The NLD and allied parties won over 80 percent of the vote in those elections, which the regime has refused to recognize. Under the new NLD proposal, the Hluttaw would then reciprocate by recognizing the SPDC as a de facto interim government during a transition period for a fixed length of time "agreeable to all parties" until elected representatives could form a new government. The NLD also demanded that the regime allow Aung San Suu Kyi to participate fully in the political process. The NLD asked the regime to set their new plan in motion by April 17

(Burmese New Year) as a "new year's gift" to the Burmese people.

¶3. (SBU) The NLD hosted its annual ceremony on February 12 to celebrate Union Day and commemorate the date in 1947 when General Aung San and several ethnic leaders signed the Panlong Agreement, pledging national unity and democratic autonomy for Burma's major ethnic regions. In keeping with the spirit of the agreement, the NLD invited prominent representatives of all major ethnic pro-democracy parties to attend the event. Leaders of the Arakan League for Democracy, the Chin National League for Democracy, the Kayan State All Nationalities League for Democracy, the Mon National Democratic Front, and the Zomi National Congress attended. This year a surprise Asian participant joined the usual diplomat attendees from the UN, U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, and Canada (Bangkok-based). The Korean Charge told us that this was the first time his mission had ever attended a public event at NLD headquarters.

¶4. (U) In his opening statement, NLD Chairman Aung Shwe called for the immediate and unconditional release of NLD leaders Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo, as well as Shan National League for Democracy leaders Hkun Htun Oo and Sai Nyunt Lwin, and all other political prisoners. He also asked the GOB to allow all NLD offices countrywide to reopen and the right for all ethnic political parties "to register and function freely." Representatives of the veteran politicians group and the ethnic parties made speeches echoing the chairman's remarks and calling for restoration of democracy and basic human rights to all the people of Burma.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: The February 12 speech in NLD's crowded headquarters building in Rangoon was not the first time party leaders have taken the initiative to resume dialogue with the

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ruling generals, and the text of U Aung Shwe's most important remarks was not transcribed and circulated until February 13.

The chief compromise in the new initiative is NLD's offer to recognize the SPDC as a legitimate interim government. However, the ruling regime knows how little credibility it has with the public and is unlikely to agree to any proposal that would see it promptly voted out of office. Senior General Than Shwe used the Union Day holiday to endorse the SPDC's "seven-step road map to democracy" in his own speech. The military clearly plans to stick to its guns and ignore the NLD's attempts to engage the generals, preferring its own bizarre form of "flourishing, disciplined democracy" that has no dialogue and no deadlines. END COMMENT.
STOLTZ